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The Phenomenon of Ego-Splitting in Husserl's Phenomenology of Pure Phantasy

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ABSTRACT

Husserl's phenomenology of imagination embraces a cluster of different theories and approaches regarding the multi-faced phenomenon of imaginative experience. In this paper I consider one aspect that seems to be crucial to the understanding of a particular form of imagination that Husserl names pure phantasy. I argue that the phenomenon of Ego-splitting discloses the best way to elucidate the peculiarity of pure phantasy with respect to other forms of representative acts (such as remembering) and to any simple form of act modification (such as neutrality modification). First, I unravel the phenomenological distinctions which, respectively, oppose phantasy to perception, on the one hand, and phantasy to other forms of the so-called "intuitive representations". Second, I introduce the difference between presentative and representative acts, arguing that this cannot help us to single out the defining feature of phantasy experiences. The third section draws again an important distinction between pure phantasy and neutrality modification, which allows me to finally determine an internal trait of phantasy experiences, which Husserl refers to as the "Ego-splitting" (*Ichspaltung*). In this way, I hope to contribute to a refined characterization of Husserl's phenomenology of imagination.

1. Introduction

When approaching the topic of imagination within Edmund Husserl's framework, it seems appropriate to recall at least two aspects of his theory. The first is its fundamentally non-systematic character, meaning that Husserl actually never reached a fully fledged theory of imagination, as we may expect from philosophers such as Aristotle, David Hume or Immanuel Kant. It would and, indeed, has been a research topic on its own to single out the various nuances and different versions which Husserl endows with his theory of imaginative phenomena.¹ The latter find namely its proper place not solely in the texts published during the philosopher's lifetime, but also in a conspicuous number of lectures and research manuscripts forming a great part of his legacy.²

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¹ Cf. for instance Saraiva, *L'imagination selon Husserl; Volonté, Husserls Phänomenologie der Imagination*; and Dufourcq, *La dimension imaginaire du réel dans la philosophie de Husserl*.

² Cf. Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898–1925)*, hereafter referred to as PICM (*Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung*, hereafter referred to as Hua XXIII).

A second important aspect beyond this unsystematic character of Husserl's analyses is its not definitive character. In other words, we must acknowledge the fact that Husserl's analyses are not a complete task, but rather they ask us for completion and, in some cases, perhaps even for correction. Far from being a distinctive marking of Husserl's investigations into the realm of imaginative experiences, this aspect represents after all a common feature of his phenomenological enterprise. Accordingly, the principal task of a philosophical assessment of Husserl's theory of imagination does not simply involve a historical overview of his changing positions concerning the notion of imagination during his lifetime, but also, and probably more stringently, a challenging confrontation with its biases and, if possible, the opening up of new research questions.

The present paper wishes to place itself in the latter of these directions of inquiry. It is my intention here to provide an examination of a particular form of imagination, namely pure phantasy, as developed by Husserl. In this respect, I will deliberately put aside historical and philological aspects, while focusing more on the theoretical traits that characterize Husserl's phenomenology of phantasy.

Having mentioned this main goal, I briefly sketch the structure of the present paper. First, I tackle the problem of imagination in Husserl's phenomenology by focusing on what Husserl calls "pure phantasy" (*reine Phantasie*). This necessitates unravelling first (§1) the phenomenological distinctions which, respectively, oppose phantasy to perception on the one hand, and phantasy to other forms of the so-called "intuitive re-presentations" (*anschauliche Vergegenwärtigungen*),³ such as remembering, on the other hand. Second, I introduce the distinction between presentative and representative acts in more detail, arguing that the latter cannot help us to identify the characteristic feature of phantasy experiences. In order to do this, the Empiricist view on imagination and the relative critique endorsed by Husserl will be assessed in order to shed some light on the phenomenological understanding of imaginative experiences. In the second section (§2), I point out, based on an important observation of Eugen Fink but also endorsed by Husserl, that the differentiation between the types of representative acts has to be connected with the discrepancy of their respective temporal horizons. The third section (§3) draws an important distinction between pure phantasy and what Husserl calls neutrality modification. This allows us to determine an internal trait of phantasy experiences which Husserl in his manuscripts and lectures refers to as the "Ego-splitting" (*Ichspaltung*). I argue that this fact, namely that phantasy entails a sort of reduplication of the I and of the stream of consciousness, plays a crucial role in Husserl's definition of phantasy experiences in contrast to perception and the other forms of re-presentation. In this last part of the paper, I then introduce a notion that should help us to gain closer understanding of this phenomenon, namely the notion of inner consciousness, nowadays known as "pre-reflective self-awareness". In this way, I hope to contribute to a refined characterization of Husserl's phenomenology of imagination and, in particular, of his theory of phantasy.

2. The Empiricist View on the Nature of Phantasy and Husserl's Critique

According to Husserl, phantasy, which he early on hardly distinguishes from imagination *tout court*, belongs to a specific range of experiences whose distinctive character is to

³ I follow John B. Brough translating the German *Vergegenwärtigung* with re-presentation.

represent an object which does not directly manifest itself, but it is absent from the actual field of perception. “Consciousness of *non-presence* (*Nichtgegenwärtigkeits-Bewusstsein*)”, so Husserl, “belongs to the essence of phantasy. We live in a present; we have a perceptual field of regard. In addition, however, we have appearances that present something not present lying entirely outside this field of regard.”⁴ In this sense, Husserl’s theory of phantasy mirrors and renews a millenary tradition in philosophy that considers imagination as a sort of reproduction of an absent object. This tradition finds its starting point in Aristotle’s *De Anima* iii, 3 where imagination (*φαντασία*) is regarded as the faculty of providing a presence in absence of the objects of sensuous perception.⁵ This definition of imagination results, not only in Husserl but in many philosophers before him (for instance, David Hume), with a strict comparison between phantasy and the act of remembering. It is evident that, in remembering a past event, it is like experiencing an absent object (the past event) in the present moment so that also remembering closely resembles imagination due to its capacity of allowing absent objects to appear. Then, one may ask, is there any difference at all between imagining, on the hand, and remembering, on the other? Empiricist philosophers, like the above-mentioned David Hume,⁶ opted for the simplest solution. Their point is that phantasy and memory are two different faculties of the soul. The empiric evidence for this distinction stems from the fact that objects, respectively, of phantasy and remembering appear to us in a different degree of clarity: in the case of remembering, we have a clearer and more fully fledged intuition than that which we can obtain by simply imagining a given object. It is not an objection to the Empiricist view to say that remembering differs from imagining because of the different temporal connotations of the two representations. One may in fact consider the example of an imagination of a past event, like when I am engaged in a phantasy of Caesar’s murder. In this case, the imagined object (Caesar’s murder as I imagine it) has the same temporal character as the remembered object (the objective fact of Caesar’s murder), that is to say, I grasp them as belonging to the same time, so that the difference between the two has to be found in some other traits of the intentional object or of the intentional act and its internal structure, rather than in their mere temporal connotation. We shall see in the following analyses that the Empiricist view actually fails to account for the distinctive character of phantasmatic temporality. The peculiarity of the latter in fact rules out the possibility of drawing a direct comparison between the temporal horizon of the remembered object and that of the phantasy object.

Constantly present in Husserl’s reflections on phantasy is a general dissatisfaction concerning any difference of “intensity” (*Intensität*) or, as Husserl also puts it, “vitality” (*Lebendigkeit*) between the acts of phantasy and those of remembering. In the renowned third part of the lecture course from the winter semester 1904/05 which concerns the “Principal Parts of the Phenomenology and Theory of Knowledge”, Husserl explicitly argues that

the trait of intensity or vitality obviously belongs to the contents, not to the apprehensions.
[. . .] The same object is presented at one time with great fullness of apprehension contents, at

⁴ PICM, 63, translation modified (Hua XXIII, 58 f.).

⁵ Cf. Turnbull, “Aristotle on Imagination: ‘De anima’ iii 3.” Christian Wolff famously rephrased the Aristotelian dictum as follows: imagination is “*facultas producendi perceptiones rerum sensibilibus absentium*” (Wolff, *Psychologia Empirica*, §92). For reasons that cannot be expounded here, Husserl rejects *in toto* the psychology of faculties that we find both in Aristotle’s and Wolff’s definitions. Nonetheless, he remains faithful to the also tradition-laden formula which describes phantasy in terms of the consciousness of an absent object.

⁶ Cf. *Treatise of Human Nature*, I, I, 1–2 and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, II.

another time with little fullness; and in volatile change it is presented now with greater fullness, now with less. This cannot, of course, be the ground for any essential distinctions, since the distinctions within the phantasy presentations of the same object are at least as great as all of the distinctions that belong to the perceptual presentations.⁷

This remark clearly points out how Husserl's main interest lies in the "essential distinctions" (*Wesensunterschiede*) between the various species of intentional acts, so that he does not reduce the scope of his analysis, as the Empiricists did, to the differences in degrees of intensity relative to the experienced content.

Husserl not only adopts this approach when it comes to illustrating the distinction between phantasy and remembering, but also, and more surprisingly, when he needs to draw the distinction between phantasy and perception. The following example might make this point clearer. Husserl is particularly sensitive to cases in which phantasy experiences may closely resemble perceptions or, the other way round, perceptions that display a very similar character with regard to phantasies. The latter is the case of experiences we have, for instance, at dawn, in the fog, or at twilight, that is in all experiences in which the contours of things appear blurry and unclear, so that we might end up asking ourselves whether we are really perceiving those things or are we instead daydreaming. Husserl is prompted to acknowledge a sort of analogy between those experiences (which, strictly speaking, belong to the sphere of perception) and the representations of phantasy, but he stresses that "these perceptual analogues still appear in a different manner."⁸ There is still, to put it in other terms, the motivation for a clear-cut distinction between perception and phantasy which goes beyond their different degrees of clarity. In this manner, the Empiricist account demonstrates its insufficiency in meeting the needs of a phenomenological description of phantasy.

3. Presentative/Representative Acts and the Distinctive Temporality of Phantasy Experiences

In ruling out intensity or vivacity as distinctive traits of phantasy representations, Husserl principally wished to overcome the doctrine of his master, Franz Brentano. Brentano, in fact, puts in his early lecture courses of winter semester 1885/86 entitled *Ausgewählte Fragen aus der Psychologie und Ästhetik*⁹ the experience of phantasy under the category of "improper representations" (*uneigentliche Vorstellungen*), i.e. acts that indirectly represent their object not by means of a sign which stands for the object itself.¹⁰ This characterization is for Husserl simply not able to illustrate the distinction between phantasy and perception on the hand, and to define the peculiar trait of phantasy experience on the other. In contrast, he retains that a more refined distinction may be found in the respective mode of givenness (*Gegebenheitsweise*) which pertains to the two forms of the intentional act. The first phenomenological definition of imagination that we find in the lecture course of 1905/06 clearly distinguishes between the presenting acts (*Gegenwärtigungen*) and representing acts (*Vergegenwärtigungen*). The passage reads:

⁷ PICM, 13 f. (Hua XXIII, 14; cf. also *ibid.*, 100). *A propos* Hume's concept of "vivacity" and its Brentanian revival, see in particular Hua XXIII, Nr. 1, §46, 96 ff.

⁸ PICM, 64 (Hua XXIII, 60). Cf. also Hua XXIII, 93 f.

⁹ Now published in Brentano, *Grundzüge der Ästhetik*, 3–87. Husserl himself refers to these lectures in his "Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano," 153, 157) and Hua XXIII, 4.

¹⁰ For a critique of Brentano's theory of phantasy, see especially Hua XXIII, Nr. 1, §4, 8 ff. and §45, 92 ff.

We characterize perception as an act in which something objective appears to us in its own person, as it were, as present itself [*selbst gegenwärtig*]. In phantasy, to be sure, the object itself appears (insofar as it is precisely the *object* that appears there), but it does not appear as present. It is only re-presented [*vergegenwärtigt*]; it is as though it were there, but only as though. It appears to us in *image*. The Latins say *imaginatio*.¹¹

Now, if the re-presentative character of phantasy experiences is the principal trait that allows us to make a *phenomenological* distinction between phantasy and perception, it remains problematic to single out, among the class of phantasy representations, those which Husserl characterizes as “pure phantasy” (*reine Phantasie*). In other terms, the re-presentative/presentative dichotomy does not permit us to disentangle imagination from phenomena such as remembering, expectations, making co-present (*Gegenwartserinnerung*),¹² and empathy, because according to Husserl they all are different forms of representations. What is the fundamental trait that permits us to draw a difference among these forms of intuitive representation?

A possible suggestion can be found in Eugen Fink’s inaugural dissertation of 1929, whose title is “*Vergegenwärtigung und Bild. Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Unwirklichkeit*”. Here, Fink admits as a general criterion for distinguishing the diverse forms of imagination that of the temporal horizon which belong to each representative act. As Fink observes: “The principal forms of imagination differ not with respect to the principal forms of the experiencing acts; rather [. . .] they differ with respect to the manifold of temporal horizons, in which the presenting act-life a priori finds itself. In this sense, remembering is essentially related to the past, expectation to the future.” Nevertheless, he immediately adds: “In which sense a [specific] temporal horizon should correspond to the making co-present (*Mitgegenwärtigung*) and likewise to phantasy and dreaming, this remains an open issue.”¹³

It is not my intention here to flesh out Fink’s theory of imagination; I wish only to highlight an argumentative point that Fink explicitly endorses and Husserl more or less implicitly admits in his manuscripts and lectures. This point is that the difference between phantasy and the other forms of representative acts is based on the difference of their respective temporal horizons. Whereas all the other types of re-presentation share their temporal horizon with the temporal horizon of perception, this does not hold for pure phantasy. We find this same thesis expressed both by Fink¹⁴ and by Husserl.¹⁵ This idea can best be demonstrated with the help of an example. The distinction between remembering and phantasy is a case in point. The memory of a past event entails a representation of the temporal horizon of the old perceptions in which the past event originally appeared. This is due to the complex intentional structure of remembering acts. When I remember the coffee I drank this morning, I am not just re-presenting the coffee with its characteristic flavour and taste, that is, with all the “adumbrations” (*Abschattungen*) that make it an object of transcendent perception. In addition, I am

¹¹ PICM, 18 (Hua XXIII, Nr. 1, §8, 16). Cf. also PICM, 107 (Hua XXIII, 100) and Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)* (Hua X), 34.

¹² For this particular form of representation, cf. Hua X, 60 f., 69, Fink, “*Vergegenwärtigung und Bild*,” 44 ff.; Volonté, *Husserl’s Phänomenologie der Imagination*, 220 ff.

¹³ Fink, “*Vergegenwärtigung und Bild*,” 21 f. (my translation).

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵ Cf. Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time, 1893–1917* (PCIT), 112 (Hua X, 107). For a discussion of this aspect in Husserl’s phenomenology of time, see for instance Schnell, *Temps et phénomène*, 35 ff.

also indirectly re-presenting the past perception of the coffee.¹⁶ This clarifies the *reproductive* character or, as Husserl has it, the “intentional modification”¹⁷ typical of re-presentative acts such as remembering. Yet, if every form of re-presentation is nothing else than a modification of an original act of perception, then representations and their correlative temporal horizons strictly depend on perception and its temporal horizon.¹⁸ There is no doubt that this must be the case for remembering: how could we otherwise remember a past event without having ever perceived it? In Husserl’s own phrasing,

Representation refers back to perception in its own peculiar phenomenological essence; e.g., [. . .] remembering something past implies ‘having perceived’; thus in a certain fashion the ‘corresponding’ perception (perception of the same sense-core) is intended to in the memory, although it is not actually contained in it. Precisely in its own peculiar essence, memory is a ‘modification of’ perception.¹⁹

However, it is questionable that the same should also hold when we let our imagination run wild in representing, for instance, centaurs or Amazons – granted that we never really encountered centaurs or Amazons in real life. What is in this case the relation, if any, between the perceived world and the world of phantasy? How can we distinguish them from a phenomenological standpoint?

These questions show, once again, that the presentation/re-presentation dichotomy is far from sufficient for a clear understanding of the difference between phantasy and perception, as well as between phantasy and other forms of representations. In order to reach more clarity on this issue, this is what I contend: it is necessary to introduce the notion of the Ego-splitting that plays a crucial and perhaps more fundamental role than the one played by the mentioned dichotomy within Husserl’s analyses of imagination. However, before tackling the problem of the Ego-splitting in Husserl’s phenomenology of phantasy, another definition of phantasy that we find in Husserl’s texts deserves brief mention here.

4. Phantasy and Neutrality Modification

It is important at this point to clear the way from a possible misunderstanding. Its cause can be traced back to Husserl himself. In §111 of *Ideas I*, Husserl proposes one of his most renowned definitions of phantasy. The text reads: “universally *phantasying* is the *neutrality modification* of ‘positing’ re-presentation [*Vergegenwärtigung*], therefore of memory in the widest conceivable sense”.²⁰ The notion of neutrality modification – to which Husserl devotes a discrete number of paragraphs in *Ideas I*²¹ – was already introduced in the

¹⁶ Cf. Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Edmund Husserl*, 135; Bernet, “Unconscious Consciousness in Husserl and Freud,” 336 f.

¹⁷ Cf. for instance Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik* (Hua XVII), 276.

¹⁸ Such a conclusion has been purported by Maria Manuela Saraiva in her classical work on Husserl’s phenomenology of imagination; see Saraiva, *L’imagination selon Husserl*, 141 ff. Cf. also Dufourcq, *La dimension imaginaire du réel dans la philosophie de Husserl*, 23 ff.

¹⁹ Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy (Ideas I)*, p. 244 (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Hua III/1), 233 f.). Husserl explicitly criticizes his early conception of phantasy as intentional modification in the late manuscripts (cf. PICM, 621; Hua XXIII, 520; see Dufourcq, *La dimension imaginaire du réel*, 75 f.).

²⁰ *Ideas I*, 260 (translation modified; Hua III/1, 250). Cf. also Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)* (Hua VIII), 112–13; Hua XXIII, 322; Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Edmund Husserl*, 137–38; Saraiva, *L’imagination selon Husserl*, 204–16; Volonté, *Husserl’s Phänomenologie der Imagination*, 214 ff.

²¹ Cf. Hua III/1, §§9–14, 247–62.

Fifth Logical Investigation (1901) under the label of “qualitative modification”.²² In contrast to the intentional modification of remembering a past perception we dealt with in the previous section, the qualitative modification of neutrality does not involve a passage from one type of, as the jargon of the *Logical Investigations* has it, act-quality (e.g. perception) to another (e.g. remembering), but constitutes a modification which can occur within one and the same act.²³ The neutrality modification thus consists of the putting out of action of the positing character (*Setzungscharakter*) of a determinate experience.

On a related but important note, it should be remarked that the neutrality modification differs fundamentally from the phenomenological *epoché*. If we maintain that the positing character of the general thesis of the natural attitude distinguishes itself through its original universal scope, with evident contrast to the limited scope of the positing character of a single act, we must also accept that the neutralization of the general thesis, not being a modification of a simple act, differs from the notion of neutrality modification which Husserl introduces in these paragraphs of *Ideas I*. Another important difference resides in the fact that the *epoché* is characterized by Husserl as “a matter in which we are perfectly free, and it stands over against all cogitative position-takings”,²⁴ whereas the neutrality modification of an act is usually a *motivated* modification – as we shall point out in a moment.²⁵

To return to our discussion, in *Ideas I* Husserl understands pure phantasy in the sense of a neutrality modification of a particular species of act: namely, positing re-presentations. Once again, remembering is the case in point. If I imagine remembering a past event, I do not pose the act of remembering (and its object as well) as existing. In contrast, I would live in what Husserl sometimes calls a “neutral attitude” (*neutrale Einstellung*),²⁶ an attitude in which the acts and their respective intentional objects appear under the mark of the “as-if” (*Als-ob*). Living in this attitude, Husserl claims, is as if I was a “disentangled observer” (*unbeteiligter Zuschauer*) of my consciousness life, oriented towards my acts and their intentional objects without advancing any claim about their being or not-being.²⁷ Nonetheless, the objection may be raised: is this really what we mean by pure phantasy?

In one of his latest manuscripts dealing with the phenomenon of phantasy, we notice a certain oscillation in Husserl’s thinking regarding the analogy between phantasy and neutrality modification.²⁸ If at the beginning of this text Husserl still sympathizes with the doctrine exposed in *Ideas I* so fully as to identify phantasy with neutrality modification (and to identify it with the phenomenological *epoché*),²⁹ he eventually admits an essential distinction that renders such an analogy inadmissible. In Husserl’s own words:

There is a difference, of course, depending on whether a positional experience – originally positional or modalized – is neutralized for the first time [. . .], or whether a neutral experience arises at the beginning that does not give us the possibility of any position at all.³⁰

²² Cf. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Hua XIX/1), §§39 f. For a general assessment of Husserl’s doctrine of neutrality modification, see Brainard, *Belief and its Neutralization*, 157–79 and Ni, *Seinsglaube in der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls*, 189–204.

²³ Cf. Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Edmund Husserl*, 137.

²⁴ *Ideas I*, 59. Cf. also Schuhmann, *Die Fundamentalbetrachtung der Phänomenologie*, 36 f.

²⁵ To put this in perspective, cf. below the discussion of the Panopticum illusion.

²⁶ See, for instance, Hua XXIII, 571.

²⁷ Cf. Hua XXIII, 573; Hua VIII, 112 ff.

²⁸ Cf. Hua XXIII, 571–90.

²⁹ Cf. Hua XXIII, 571–74. See also Depraz, *Transcendence et incarnation*, 265 ff.

³⁰ PICM, 694 (Hua XXIII, 576).

There are good grounds for believing that the second possibility introduced by Husserl in this passage epitomizes the case of pure phantasy. Some lines below in the same manuscript, Husserl offers a simple but well-suited example to illustrate this point. If I now imagine that beings of a human sort live on Sirius, I am purely imaging a brand new situation that I never thought of before. Hence, I am not operating a neutrality modification of a previously existing belief of mine. I have honestly never thought of such a possibility, which means that I neither believed it nor negated it – and it is evident that now, while imaging, I am posing the existence or non-existence of aliens populating the planet Sirius. Rather, I am simply phantasizing this very unlikely state of affairs without caring about its possible truth-value. Therefore, the peculiar neutrality modification that takes place in phantasy experiences “arises at the beginning” and does not presuppose any position whatsoever which in a second moment must undergo neutralization. As paradoxical as it may seem, phantasy is a neutrality modification of a positing act that has never actually occurred, because the act imagined in phantasy (in the example, the belief concerning the existence of humanoid aliens populating Sirius) is “produced” by the phantasy experience, that is, it was not already there from the beginning and was only afterwards neutralized.

The difference between pure phantasy and neutrality modification thus depends on a specific character which every act maintains after having been neutralized. This character is determined by the fact that neutrality modifications, as modifications of previously given acts, are always motivated in this or that way. So Husserl: “Every motivation, every psychic total situation that stimulates neutrality, also gives to the neutrality a characteristic [*Charakter*]. The suppression of a positionality, understood as abstention, is a characteristic, just as the playfulness [*das Spielerische*] of ‘free’ phantasy is.”³¹ What Husserl names here the pure phantasy’s “playfulness” amounts to the essential absence in phantasy experiences of any motivation that should ground the inhibition of the positing character of intentional acts. As a non-motivated act, the neutralization at work in the case of phantasy for Husserl goes beyond any “legitimation of reason”. “In accordance with their essence, *genuinely*, non-neutralized noeses are subject to the ‘*legitimation of reason*’, whereas *the question about reason and unreason makes no sense for the neutralized noeses.*”³² This point is best evidenced in the contrast between two different types of phantasy experiences according to Husserl: namely, pure, reproductive phantasy and perceptual phantasy. In fact, they differ with respect to their motivational grounds. To substantiate this idea, let us briefly take a closer look at the phenomenon of perceptual phantasies according to Husserl.

“Perceptual phantasies”³³ may be roughly defined as motivated phantasy experiences, which in turn need to be distinguished not only from pure phantasies, but also from perceptual illusions. The phenomenon of perceptual illusion or hallucination entails a conflict between two (or more) perceptions, which is settled by maintaining one perception for true and the other(s) for false. For instance, if in a first moment I see a stick in water which appears to be bent, I can afterwards take it out of the water and thus have the

³¹ PCIM, 695 (Hua XXIII, 578). In an analogous way, Fink states that pure phantasies “*sind durch keine bestimmten Motivationen verbunden*” (Fink, “*Vergegenwärtigung und Bild*,” 48).

³² *Ideas I*, 259 (Hua III/1, 249).

³³ See, for instance, Bernet, *Conscience et existence*, 106 ff.

perception of its straightness.³⁴ The first perception has become an illusion, i.e. a false perception (*Trugwahrnehmung*). Now, in the case of perceptual phantasy the situation is different, because here I intentionally abstract from the real being of the perceptual object. A version of the so-called “illusion” of Panopticum waxworks may exhibit the point at stake here.³⁵ Indeed, the very concept of “illusion” is inaccurate here, at the very least. The activity of apprehending the waxwork figure from time to time as a charming lady and as a puppet cannot be regarded as a case of proper illusion because, we are told, “two perceptual interpretations, or two appearances of a thing, interpenetrate, coinciding as it were in part in their perceptual content. And they interpenetrate *in conflicting fashion*, so that our observation wanders from one to another of the apparent objects each barring the other from existence”.³⁶ In virtue of their unsettled perceptual conflict, we now neutralize the position takings of both perceptions: I do not perceive a puppet or a human being; rather, for the positing of their existence has been put out of action, I changed my attitude towards them and start to engage with a phantasy experience. I do not even mistake a puppet for a human being, and in this sense it is wrong to characterize this experience as a form of illusion. Perceptual phantasies like that of the Panopticum wax figures have in common with pure phantasy the neutralization of the existential positing of their respective intentional objects, but they differ with respect to their original perceptual character, that is, because they imply previous perceptions that now undergo a neutrality modification. On the other hand, pure phantasy does not presuppose any perception and, hence, also in this case it appears to be fully unmotivated. Thus in Husserl’s terms, pure phantasy is best characterized as “an act of subjective freedom”,³⁷ an unmotivated creativity that brings about its own fictive object.³⁸

Now, notice that this freedom, far from being a sort of disposition of a Fichtean absolute subject, finds its phenomenological counterpart in the specific character that marks out the phenomenon of pure phantasy: namely, the fictive character of the “as-if”. In contrast to the neutrality modification, which consists of a simple inhibition of the positing character of given acts, pure phantasy displays its own *positive* contribution to the positing; to put it differently, it has its own positional character. In a manuscript from 1912, Husserl calls this the “quasi-positing” (*quasi-Setzung*).³⁹ Phantasizing, we live through quasi-perceptions that allow the appearance of a quasi-world, the world of phantasy. However, these quasi-perceptions are not already-given perceptions that withstand a subsequent modification, such as the remembered perception. Indeed, they are the very *product* of phantasy. The creative character of the phantasy experience needs not to be understood in the poietic sense of the production of a new being which from now on must occupy a specific place in the world. The quasi-positing does not multiply the

³⁴ Notice that I willingly do not mention the case in which the stick is contemporaneously touched by my hand and seen by my eyes in the water. Here, we would perceive the object *at the same time* as bent and as straight so that the belief about the bendiness of the stick would not be affected but would remain in an open conflict with the belief about the straightness of the stick. This cannot be regarded as an illusion but, as we shall see in a moment, as a particular case of perceptual phantasy.

³⁵ Cf. Hua XIX/1, *Fifth Logical Investigation*, §27.

³⁶ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 138 (my emphasis).

³⁷ Bernet, *Conscience et existence*, 108 (my translation).

³⁸ Cf. Bernet, *Conscience et existence*, 115 and Bernet, “Phantasieren und Phantasma bei Husserl und Freud,” here 4 f.

³⁹ Cf. Hua XXIII, 464 ff.

number of actual beings; instead, it creates a new quasi-entity, as it were, which ends up by populating not the actual world but the world of pure phantasy.⁴⁰

Thus, we must conclude that the phantasy is a paradoxical form of “modification” or “re-production” of a perception which creates this very perception in the same breath in which it modifies and reproduces it.⁴¹

5. The Ego-Splitting in Phantasy Experiences

At this point, we need to pose and discuss the following question: how is consciousness aware of the as-if character of phantasy experiences? It is precisely here that the Ego-splitting comes into play. The as-if character must be in some way experienced by the phantasizing subject. Were this not the case, there could be no way to differentiate an act of phantasy from a perception. Moreover, the distinctive character of a phantasy experience must be experienced in the first person by the subject living through it, in order for the phenomenon to be grasped phenomenologically. These, however, are primarily external reasons that speak in favour of a self-experiencing of the act of phantasy. Besides them, there are also phenomenological reasons for this. As a matter of fact, the quasi-positioning of the phantasy act becomes aware through what Husserl calls, with a characteristic fluctuation of his terminology, “inner consciousness” (*inneres Bewusstsein*), “inner perception” (*innere Wahrnehmung*), or “original consciousness” (*Urbewusstsein*) of the act. In an important appendix to his lectures on time-consciousness, entitled *Internal Consciousness and the Grasping of Experiences*, Husserl illustrates this general character of all acts of consciousness as follows: “Every act is consciousness of something, but there is also consciousness of every act. Every experience is ‘sensed’ (*empfunden*), is immanently ‘perceived’ (internal consciousness).”⁴² This inner experiencing accompanies every kind of intentional act and is not in itself, as Husserl points out, an intentional act – otherwise this would evidently lead to an infinite regress.⁴³ As a consequence, one can live through a phantasy experience only in virtue of an internal awareness of that experience and its respective quasi-positing character. This is of the utmost importance for a proper definition of phantasy because, as already mentioned, if we did not have such inner consciousness of the phantasizing act, we would stand no chance of carrying out the divide between phantasy and perception.

However, if we take a closer look at this significant phenomenon, what comes to light is how this inner consciousness is responsible for the Ego-splitting in the case of phantasy experiences. As Rudolf Bernet underlines in his book *Conscience et existence*: “The inner consciousness of the accomplishment of an act of phantasy is the living experience of a reduplication of the intentional consciousness.”⁴⁴ This entails that whenever we live through an act of phantasy we undergo a specific doubling or split of the intentional consciousness as well as of the I. Let us develop this point in more detail.

⁴⁰ It should be added that, differently from the actual world which is one and the same independently of who is intending it and at which time she is intending it, phantasy world is inherently plural. It is another one every time we perform a phantasy or someone different from us does it.

⁴¹ Cf. Bernet, *Conscience et existence*, 111 and Bernet, “Phantasieren und Phantasma,” 5 f.

⁴² PICT, 130 (Hua X, 126).

⁴³ Infinite regress is just one of the many objections a reflection theory of self-awareness encounters. For a detailed discussion of these issues in relation to Husserl as well as other phenomenologists, cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*.

⁴⁴ Bernet, *Conscience et existence*, 6 (my translation). Cf. also PICM, 34 (Hua XXII, 33).

To begin with, it is necessary to introduce a distinction between two forms of split involved in the living through of phantasy experiences. First, there is the split of intentional consciousness mentioned above. Phantasizing and phantasized experiences are different, although they belong together in the complex act of phantasy: in this act are, so to speak, “contained” my actual experience of phantasizing and the content of this experience, the phantasized experience as such. Yet, the difference at stake here does not simply depend on the trivial fact that these two experiences display two different intentional contents: that is, the phantasized experience, on the one hand, and the content of the phantasized experience, which may also be an object or an experience, on the other. Rather, the phantasized experiences and the phantasizing experiences present a structural difference which pertains to their respective temporal dimensions. Phantasy experiences of the phantasized I do not belong to the same temporal flux of the phantasizing I. As Fink puts it, “the time [of the phantasy world] does not coincide with the time of the actual I, it does not stand in any relation of orientation with the present, in which the phantasy experience constitutes itself”.⁴⁵ This aspect should make the distinction between phantasy and remembering even clearer. In remembering, in fact, we also experience a doubling of the intentional act, but in this case the two moments, namely the remembered perception and the actual remembering, belong to one and the same flux of consciousness. On the contrary, the phantasized experience and the phantasizing experience remain alien to each other, for they belong to two different worlds and to two different I’s.

In addition, the split also involves a redoubling of the I which lives through the phantasy experience. This difference between the phantasizing and the phantasized I comes to the fore particularly in Husserl’s reference to the phenomenon of phantasy in the second book of his lectures on *First Philosophy*. Here, Husserl introduces the example of the phantasy experience of a centaurs’ battle. Phantasizing the battle, Husserl pinpoints, “I am myself in a certain sense and necessarily co-phantasized; for how could I imagine such a section of the phantasy world, without imaging it from a *particular orientation*?”⁴⁶ One could argue that, in a certain respect, the analogy between phantasy and perception holds, for also in phantasy we cannot quasi-perceive an object if not from a particular viewpoint in the phantasy space. This speaks for the fact that the phantasizing I and the phantasized I share certain common features like having a perspective in a perceptual world, which in turn implies the existence of a body even for the phantasized I because, as Husserl repeatedly remarks, the body functions in any perceptual field as the absolute zero-point of orientation (*Nullpunkt der Orientierung*).⁴⁷ However, what is interesting here is the fact that the phantasized I that observes the centaurs’ battle from a certain orientation is detached from the I which lives through the phantasy experience. There are strong reasons why this is or, at best, should be the case.

⁴⁵ Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung und Bild,” 46 (passage already quoted above). However, consider also Husserl’s own formulations about the specific character of phantasy time as detached from the absolute time of perception in Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil* (EU), §39, 195 ff.

⁴⁶ Hua VIII, 116 (my translation). Cf. also PICM, 556 (Hua XXIII, 467).

⁴⁷ Cf. Husserl, *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907* (Hua XVI), 302, 308 ff.; Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Hua IV), 127; Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* (Hua XIV), 342, 351, 375, 455; Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis* (Hua IX), 297 f.; Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie* (Hua IX), 157.

The first is more an ought-to-be reason than a phenomenological one, which makes sense only if one is ready to endorse the general rationalist flavour of Husserl's analyses.⁴⁸ This reason explains why it is *better* that the phantasizing I and the phantasized I do not conflate, although it does not provide any clue why they are *actually* not the same. Natalie Depraz expresses this reason in the clearest way possible when claiming that, if a reunification between the two I's ultimately took place, "one would face a case of madness due to multiple personality disorder, schizo-phrenia in the literal sense".⁴⁹ The phantasizing I and the phantasized I must remain separated if the I should maintain its identity and, thus, its sanity. Certainly, some strong supporters of the post-modern view on the self could argue that we do not need to presuppose an identical I through all our experiences, this being a false presupposition of the Modern era which we can painlessly depart from. In this sense, Husserl's analyses may be interpreted as belonging to that era as well, and his own rationalist ideal of a harmonious coherence between all the experiences of a single subject would resemble in that view a still unquestioned presupposition.

However, this is only one way to address the problem of Ego-splitting in Husserl's phenomenology of phantasy. I think one needs to look at the specific phenomenological reasons which convinced Husserl to postulate the identity of the flux of experiences while at the same time acknowledging the split between the phantasizing I and the phantasized I. In other terms, it can be argued that the impossibility of reunifying the two I's stems from both static and genetic considerations.

From a static point of view, the phantasized I represents the Ego-pole of the quasi-perception reproduced by the phantasy experience, whereas the phantasizing I equals the Ego-pole of this experience itself. This means that they belong to the inner intentional structure of two different acts and, hence, must be kept separate. Even the possibility of an "overlapping" (*Deckung*) between the two Ego-poles is ruled out by Husserl because they belong to two different fluxes of consciousness, i.e. to two different temporal horizons.⁵⁰

From a genetic point of view, I cannot consider the phantasized I as myself because this one, together with the phantasy experience that gives rise to it, is *the product of an unmotivated act of subjective freedom*, as previously argued. It cannot find, so to speak, a place in my life-history⁵¹ because it does not fit with my past sedimented experiences in which, to remain in the example, no centaurs occur and perform a battle in front of my incredulous eyes. The rise of another I besides my real I in the phantasy experiences does not possess any genetic explanation, it is an unmotivated genesis which resides in itself. If we are forced to postulate this sort of genetic gap in the history of the I, we cannot reconcile the two I's once again. Therefore, the view that contends a fundamental difference within the internal structure of the I has good reasons to be maintained from the genetic standpoint also.

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Penelope Allsobrook for letting me think of this point.

⁴⁹ "On aurait affaire à un cas de folie par dédoublement de la personnalité, schizo-phrénie au sens littéral" (Depraz, *Transcendance et incarnation*, 263). Cf. also Bernet, *Conscience et existence*, 112.

⁵⁰ Cf. EU, 195 ff. See also Bernet, "Wirkliche Zeit und Phantasiezeit".

⁵¹ The term "life-history" has a twofold meaning (cf. Tengelyi, "Lebensgeschichte als Selbstkonstitution bei Husserl"). On the one hand, it connotes the narration we continuously produce in order to make sense of our own lives. On the other hand, it defines the life itself regarded as temporal becoming objectively independent from the sense we bestow upon it. In this paper, I use the term in the latter sense.

6. Conclusions

What does the characteristic split of the I and of the intentional consciousness tell us about the nature of phantasy in general and the nature of the I specifically? A first conclusion that we should gather from the analysis conducted in this paper is that the condition of possibility for phantasy relies on the reduplication of consciousness and not the other way round. In other terms, phantasy does not cause the occurring of the Ego-splitting, but it is only in virtue of the Ego-splitting that we can live through phantasy experiences. This split, as we have already expounded, depends on that particular feature of consciousness' life which Husserl calls inner consciousness, that is, the consciousness of itself every act undergoes by its very accomplishment. It is at the same level of inner consciousness that we need to recognize the fundamental source of the reduplication of the I. Thus, far from being an occasional phenomenon, the split takes place at the core of the I determining its essential nature.⁵²

The second conclusion is related to the concept of the splitting itself. As should have already become evident from the previous, the split here is not synonymous of complete separation. The examination of Husserl's phenomenology of phantasy we are pursuing in this paper unravels a striking feature of the subject of phantasy experience, namely its faculty of splitting itself without giving up its own identity. For the phantasized I does not resemble an *alter ego* which I can perceive in the real world, but this I is nothing else than me as imagined in a phantasy world. Undoubtedly there is no numerical identity between the phantasizing I and the phantasized I. Nonetheless, the two join in a fundamental "union of coincidence" (*Deckungseinheit*), meaning an identity in difference. What is the nature of this sort of synthesis?

This coincidence does not regard the Ego-poles, as argued above. As inner moments of two different acts, the Ego-pole of the phantasy experience and the Ego-pole of the phantasized experience can be neither identified nor grasped in a union of coincidence. Notwithstanding, Husserl is quite explicit in stating that, if the splitting rules out the possibility of an identification between the Egos, it renders possible their coincidence. To understand this point, one needs to draw a distinction between the Ego-pole and the I.⁵³ Different from the Ego-pole, the I is not an inner component of an act of consciousness, but a more encompassing structure which different acts of consciousness may have in common.⁵⁴ I think it is worth also introducing this distinction terminologically by referring to the "Ego-pole" as the inner moment of an intentional act and to the "I" as the broadest conception of the self the Husserlian phenomenology has to offer. More precisely, the I is what comes about after the synthesis of coincidence has been carried out between the Egos of two different acts of consciousness. In a sense, therefore, the I is the product of both the synthesis of coincidence and, as the real condition for the latter, the splitting. In other words, there cannot be an I without a synthesis of coincidence between two acts of consciousness; and in turn, there cannot be a synthesis of coincidence if before there is nothing to synthesize. The material of the synthesis, so to speak, is

⁵² For reasons of space, I cannot dig into the fundamental splitting of the I in this paper. See instead my "The Phenomenon of I – Splitting in the Transcendental Philosophies of Kant and Husserl" (forthcoming).

⁵³ Such a distinction underpinned in a way the previous analyses, but was not made explicit.

⁵⁴ Of course, an indispensable condition for this is that the two acts belong to the same stream of consciousness.

provided by the splitting. Hence, the splitting may be considered as the most basic condition for the constitution of an I.

At this point, one may raise the objection that it is odd to speak of a split in the first place where there is nothing to be split. How could one intend an Ego- or I-splitting, if the splitting is at the basis of the constitution of the I itself? To answer this objection, it is sufficient to take a closer look to the concept of “constitution” (*Konstitution*) at stake here. Constitution is certainly not synonymous of “production” (*Erzeugung*), according to Husserl. The I is not the real product of a synthesis of coincidence between different acts of consciousness. What constitution refers to is rather a form of manifestation or, better, self-manifestation of the I, which can take place only if the synthesis of coincidence underlying several acts has been carried out. Thus, the splitting renders possible not the coming to being of the I, but its self-manifestation. However, because in phenomenology the mode of appearing of whatever object, in this case the I, is essential to the definition of the object itself, we may draw the conclusion that the splitting, as the condition for the manifestation and appearing of the I, belongs to the most essential features of the I. In phenomenological terms, the splitting is a necessary moment of the essence “I”.

Through its account of the Ego-splitting in pure phantasy, Husserl opens up a new perspective regarding the understanding of the concepts of identity and difference. This same perspective would need further development that I am unfortunately unable to undertake in this paper. In spite of this, I hope to have made a contribution to fleshing out the sense in which the Ego-splitting plays a central and irreplaceable role in the experiences of pure phantasy, as well as the close relationship between the latter, the inner consciousness and phantasy experiences.⁵⁵

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⁵⁵ I wish to express my gratitude to Penelope Allsobrook for her patient work of rendering my English more comprehensible.

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